TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

CHAPTER ONE, Medieval scholars and modern nativists: 1

1. The literary corpus and its monastic transmission 1
2. The Indo-European hypothesis 2
3. Orality and the written text 3
4. Paganism and monastic authors 6
5. Medieval Ireland's alleged social archaism 8
6. International scholarship in a cultural backwater? 10
7. The peripheries: Ireland and India 13
8. Clerical influence and pagan tradition 17
9. The druidic legacy and the 'Celtic twilight' 19
10. Monastic scholars, poets, jurists and historians 22
11. Disciplinary interdependence and the monastic core curriculum 24
12. *Bard, fili* and *núalitrid* 27

CHAPTER TWO, Literary genre and narrative technique: 29

1. The biblical dimension 29
2. Some basic biblical parallels 30
3. Narrative possibilities of biblical borrowing 32
4. Latin, the vernacular and the Irish language's origin myth 35
5. Mixtures of prose and verse 37
6. The rise of rhymed syllabic metre 38
7. The nature of *roscad* or *retoiric* 41
8. Some 'psalmodic' features of *retoiric* 44
9. Narrative functions of medieval and biblical etymology 46
10. "There was a wondrous king . . ." and similar openings 48
11. Aspects of narrative prose style 49
12. Instructive recent developments in Norse saga studies 52

CHAPTER THREE, 'Pagan' myth and Christian 'history': 54

1. Mythology vs. pseudohistory 54
2. From myth to allegory 55
3. From solar to functionalist mythology 57
4. Formalist and structuralist approaches 58
5. Oral and literary myth 62
6. Myth, history and *senchus* 65
7. The Bible and the Gaels' wanderings 66
8. The invasions of Ireland and biblical analogues 69
9. Before and after Patrick 71
10. Pre-Patrician Irish believers; Cormac, Morann and Conchobar 72
11. Fintan mac Bóchra and the divine revelation of *senchus* 75
12. *Scéla Muicce Meic Da Thó* as moral satire 77
13. Christian allegory and *Echtrae Chonlai* 79

CHAPTER FOUR, The law and the prophets: 84

1. The question of pagan origins 84
2. The *áes dáno* as a levitical caste 86
3. Erc the judge, Dubthach the poet and St. Patrick in Muirchú's Life .. 89
4. The laws of nature, the letter, the prophets and Christ 92
5. Lóegaire, Dubthach, Patrick and the perfection of Irish law: a biblical construct 96
6. King, poet and bishop as promulgators of the *Senchus Már* 99
7. Caí, Cormac and pre-Patrician Ireland's 'Mosaic' code 100
8. Old Testament influence upon early Christian Irish legal rules 102
9. Matching the past with the present 104

CHAPTER FIVE, Kingship and society: 107

1. Preliminaries 107
2. Pagan Celtic sacral kingship 107
3. The Celtic and Indo-European *hieros gamos*: Nala and Damayantī, Pwyll and Rhiannon, Odysseus and Penelope 109
4. The IE king's integration of three basic social functions: some mythical and ritual reflexes 117
5. Likely pagan IE survivals in Irish regnal ideology 120
6. The early Irish king's personal attributes - physical, social and moral 121
7. *Enech* "face" and *fír flaithemon* "ruler's truth" 124
8. The early Irish king as the embodiment of society and its divisions ... 124
9. The king as mirror of early Ireland's primary social classes and their values 127
10. The sovereignty's matching threefold attributes - abstract and personal 128
11. Narrative expressions of the fate of kings and would-be kings 131
12. New sovereignty for old 132
13. *Geisi* or 'taboos' 136
14. Basic conclusions 137

CHAPTER SIX, Sovereignty and the Church: 138

1. Christian monks as devotees of pagan sovereignty? 138
2. Clerical manipulation of regnal ideology, and early Irish kingship by God's grace 139
3. The Church and the blessings of a righteous ruler 143
4. *Comúaim n-ecalsa fri túaith* "the sewing together of Church with State" in *Aided Díarmata* and *Aided Muirchertaig* 145
5. Women of sovereignty and Christian cosmology: human, angelic or demonic? 148
6. Sovereignty's sanctification: Eithne in *Altram Tige dá Medar* and Tírechán 149
7. *Echtrae Nerai* and the destruction of the sovereignty's pagan source .. 151
8. *Echta Airt* and the good or evil aspects of the pre-Patrician sovereignty 152
9. Some biblical parallels 153
10. The angelic sovereignty as an allegorical and typological prefiguration of the Church 155
11. Old Testament models for pre-Christian kingly behaviour 158

CHAPTER SEVEN, Fire and the arts: 161

1. Social tripartition, the *áes dáno* and fire 161
2. Daig, Brigit and the threefold arts of healing, craftsmanship and learning 161
3. Brig/Brigit and the correlation of the threefold arts with tripartite society 162
4. Daig, Brigit and fire 164
5. Saints Brigit and Áed, Daig and Lasar 165
6. Fire and the cooking of metals, medicaments and knowledge 166
7. Fire as a socialising agent: the hospitaller as boiler of food 169
8. Destructive fire and desocialization: the warrior's ardour and the caustic effects of dishonour 171
9. The king as cooked, eater and cook 173
10. Fire in the Bible and early Irish Christian fire symbolism 174

CHAPTER EIGHT, Heroes and saints: 179

1. Saga, saint's Life and continental hagiography 179
2. The heroic biography as exemplified by the early careers of Níall Noígíallach and St. Brigit 181
3. The taxonomic approach to heroic biography 184
4. Heroic liminality: Moses, St. Brigit, Asdiwal and Lot 185
5. Liminal or boundary situations at the conception and birth of some early Irish heroes and saints 189
6. Cormac, St. Ailbe and the suckling she-wolf in the wilderness; Mess Búachalla and incest 190
7. Liminality as a means of mediating key structural oppositions 193
8. Biblical models for some narrative attributes of St. Patrick and Níall Noígíallach 195
9. Heroes in limbo on the threshold of faith: Cú Chulainn, Conchobar and Christ 197
10. Heroic encounters with saints or poets to mediate between the pagan and Christian eras: *Síaburcharpat Con Culainn*, the "revelation" of the *Táin* and the Church's control over access to pre-Patrician *senchus* 199

CHAPTER NINE, Druids and outlaws: 203

1. Some preliminaries on early Irish fosterage 203
2. The *fer midboth*, the *óenchiniud* and the *fían* 203
3. *Díberg* "brigandage" and the early Irish *fían* as a hunter-warrior society ('Männerbund') of unmarried and propertiless young aristocrats; *brandub* in the *Codex Sancti Pauli* charm and other fraternal contests to determine inheritance of property 205
4. The *fían* as a typical Männerbund: age-grading in 'primitive' societies and medieval French knights errant 209
5. Senior *fían*-members as law enforcers 211
6. Werewolf aspects of Irish, Germanic and other Indo-European Männerbunds 213
7. The suckling she-wolf revisited: *Genemuin Chormaic*, Romulus and Remus, Cyrus of Persia, the birth of Zeus, and the Norse Volsungs .. 214

8. Clerical disapproval of the *fían*, and a modern African parallel 218
9. The druid (*druí*), satirist (*cáinte*) and other pagan excommunicates associated with the *fían* in early Christian Ireland 220
10. Respectable 'free' (*sóer-baird*) and disreputable 'base' bards (*dóer-baird*), including the *cáinte* etc 224
11. The pagan fringes of early Christian Irish society, and polarizations within the *áes dáno* 226
12. The *fili*'s origins: metamorphosed druid, renamed seer (*fáith*) or upgraded bard? 227
13. The Irish *druí* and the biblical *magus*. 229
14. Biblical typology and literary depictions of the pre-Patrician druid ... 229

CHAPTER TEN, Politics and propaganda: 233

1. The vast early Irish genealogical corpus 233
2. Anthropological research into the political functions of genealogy and its relevance to the Irish situation 235
3. Some broad outlines of the medieval Irish genealogical scheme and their significance 237
4. Leth Cuinn, Leth Moga and the kingship of Ireland 241
5. Genealogy and the interrelation of lay and ecclesiastical dynasties 243
6. Political propaganda and the narrative code: some hagiographical examples 244
7. Narrative flesh on genealogical bones 248
8. Synchronisms between appropriate genealogical nodes, and sibling rivalry as an expression of political enmity 249
9. The reinforcement of genealogical synchronisms by parallel narratives 252

EPILOGUE 256

BIBLIOGRAPHY 258

INDEX 269